



GLOBAL CONNECTIONS AND EXCHANGE TURKMENISTAN



PROGRAM NEWS

APRIL 2007

*Global Connections and Exchange
funded by the Bureau of Education
and Cultural Affairs of the US
Department of State*

THIS MONTH'S NEWS IN BRIEF:

Tech Age Girls Semifinalists are First among Turkmenistan's Bloggers

Thirty-five Tech Age Girls applied new technology skills to launch their own blogs, developing Turkmenistan's web content and exhibiting leadership in the technology field. The girls used technology to exchange information and express themselves on a variety of topics. As part of the Tech Age Girls project, the participants cultivated crucial leadership skills through trainings in leadership and technology.

Turkmen Students Make New Friends through Online Projects

Students in Turkmenistan built new friendships with American students through Global Connections online projects. As a result of discussions on *How I See the World* and *20 Questions*, students gained new insights into the lives of their international peers. The students discovered that they have common interests and many chose to exchange email addresses with one another, so they could continue to keep in touch beyond the projects.

Global Youth Service Day Comes to Turkmenistan

GCE students, teachers, and trainers came together for Global Youth Service Day to organize fifteen community service projects across the country. Over 1,000 citizens worked together in volunteer activities ranging from computer classes to tutoring and clean-up projects. GCE staff introduced youth and community members to the benefits of community service as citizens volunteered for projects.

Tech Age Girls Become the First Student Bloggers in Turkmenistan

The GCE Tech Age Girls (TAG) project addresses the demand for women in the IT field by providing leadership training to promising young female computer specialists



Thirty-five talented young women joined the ranks of Turkmenistan's first bloggers, generating web content in Turkmen and Russian and connecting with communities across the country. As a result of blogging activities, the TAG semifinalists gained new perspectives on information exchange and self-expression. Through the TAG project, girls have gained valuable technology skills and increased their access to information, empowering them to play important roles in community development.

An Ashgabat semifinalist commented, "Since there is limited information available online about Turkmen literature, I am developing my blog about Turkmen literature... I also write poems, so blogging is a convenient tool for me to share my literary works with others..." The Tech Age Girls developed their blogs daily by adding new information and inviting comments from peers. The GCE Turkmenistan Educational Portal hosts the blogs at <http://www.gcetm.net/blogs>.

In addition to computer trainings, participants also benefited from leadership lessons from Peace Corps Volunteers in all five regions. TAG semifinalists learned about the definition and styles of leadership and strategies for developing leadership qualities. GCE integrated technology into workshops and developed an online forum where TAG semifinalists discussed leadership issues and fortified the skills and knowledge gained through the project (<http://gcetm.net/forum/index.php?s=a3bcd2506cafaa50ba7541a39a6f3953&showtopic=61>). TAG semifinalists applied their new skills during Global Youth Service Day by organizing community service activities in Turkmenistan. The first cohort of Turkmen TAG semifinalists recently completed their second month of computer and leadership development.

GCE Students Build Friendship through Online Exchange

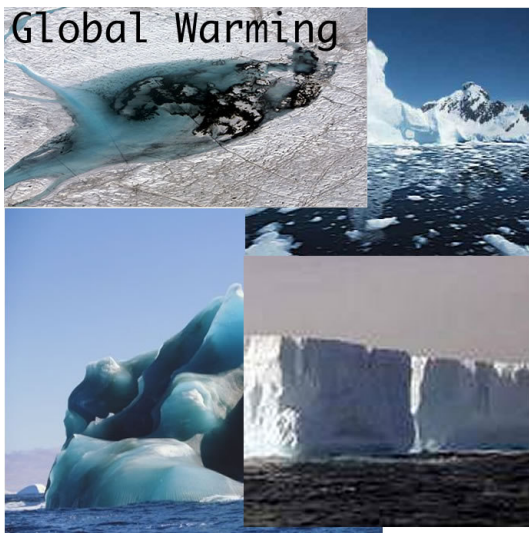
More than 110 GCE students from secondary schools in Ashgabat, Dashoguz, Mary, and Turkmenabat gained a new view of the United States through online collaboration with American students. The Turkmen students completed GCE online projects with US youth from New Bedford Global Learning Charter School in Massachusetts and Hamady Middle School in Michigan. Lessons on *How I See the World* and *20 Questions* enabled participants to share their lives and worldviews with one another on the GCE forum (<http://gcetm.net/forum/>).



While introducing themselves, Turkmen students expressed their views and hobbies to new American friends

The two online projects represented a rare opportunity for Turkmen and American students to learn about one another's cultures by asking questions, sharing ideas, and exchanging photos. The lessons offered youth in both countries the chance to make new friends online. Conversations on the forum demonstrated participants' friendly attitude toward each other. Even after the online projects came to an end, students continued corresponding. In response to the GCE lesson, Judith Perez, a Geography teacher from Hamady Middle School, commented, "I am so glad we can still communicate. My classes are going to the computer lab to email the students in Turkmenistan. This forum has been very interesting! Thank you!"





US Students from New Bedford Global Learning Charter School created their collage on Global Warming

Students exchanged opinions on issues important to their lives and the world. The US students determined that global warming is the most urgent issue nowadays. They devoted several pages in the forum to the issue and posting collages to illustrate their points. "We chose this topic because it's an important situation in the United States... because in the Arctic and other places the ice is melting causing the animals to die soon . . . " remarked one of the forum participants. Katie Brianna from Massachusetts commented, "Polar ice melting is important because, studies report that polar ice melting increases earthquakes. For example, Greenland has had more than double since 2002..."

Murat Hamrayev from Turkmenabat replied, "To stop global warming people must save energy..." Turkmen students focused their attention on wildlife conservation in Turkmen deserts and created collages on animals under threat in Turkmenistan.

Participants shared their e-mail addresses and personal websites in order to continue conversing with their new online friends. By sharing their views on international issues and discussing their lives students from each culture gained new understandings and learned that they have much in common with one another, enabling them to build new friendships.



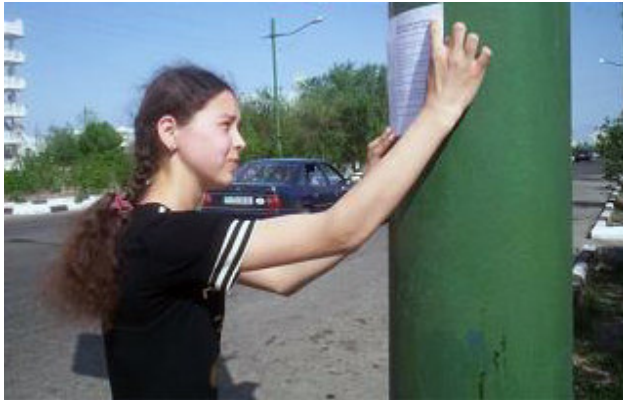
Turkmenabat students inserted the animals from the Turkmenistan's Red Book of endangered animals of in their collage

Tech Age Girls Bring Global Youth Service Day to Turkmenistan

This month, GCE students and teachers from Ashgabat, Balkanabat, Dashoguz, Mary and Turkmenabat joined young people from all over the world to mark the 8th annual Global Youth Service Day (GYSD). Global Connections organized 15 community service projects for Global Youth Service Day with participants from 30 high schools and seven educational centers in Turkmenistan. Thirty five Tech Age Girls (TAG) semifinalists applied newfound leadership skills and introduced GYSD to more than 1,000 peers in Turkmenistan's regions, towns, and villages. GCE students registered their activities on the official GYSD website and later created a web-blog in order to share their volunteer projects with others online. GCE Masters of IT Education (MITES) introduced the TAG semifinalists to GYSD. In order to implement their projects, the



semi-finalists conducted research and brainstormed ideas for local activities. They presented their ideas for GYSD at schools and regional educational centers, including plans for computer trainings for community members.



School Students Post the “Save Water” Flyers in Dashoguz

- In Yashlyk, Jemal Saryyeva (TAG) organized a series of trainings on Turkmen grammar basics for 80 children at Ahal educational center. Saryyeva remarked, “Not only were the kids happy to learn how to read and write, but I was happy to learn about my capacity to make a change.”

- Kumysh Akniyazova, Jemal Saryyeva, Maral Rahimova, and Leyli Mametyazova (TAG) conducted eight presentations and distributed outreach literature for over 300 community members on HIV/AIDS, substance abuse, diet and nutrition, and tuberculosis prevention. To prepare for the presentation, the young leaders performed Internet research on the issues and on how to use flyers and brochures to raise awareness of important issues.



Duynaguzel, TAG from Dashoguz is conducting Computer Training for Secondary School Students



The Earth Day Posters Panel at the Turkmen-Russian School of Ashgabat

- In Dashoguz, over 200 community members gained graphic editing skills as a result of trainings by seven TAG semifinalists. Community members applied their new skills to create flyers on water conservation and posted the flyers for public view.
- With the help of 18 youth volunteers, the seven TAG semifinalists led a clean-up project at Dashoguz City Kindergarten #26. The volunteers decorated the kindergarten’s verandas for the children with handmade paper spinners, stars, and different toys.



GYSD presented TAG semifinalists with a great opportunity to practice leadership and educate their fellow Turkmen on the importance of community service. The TAG presentations inspired students to make further contributions in their own communities. Participants learned that volunteering is a wonderful way to learn teamwork and have fun.

GCE Students Mark Earth Day and Raise Awareness of Ecological Problems



**“Save the Earth” collage prepared by
Azat Madamanov**

For Earth Day, Turkmen students from diverse regions shared their opinions and experiences in carrying out actions to protect the environment. Together with MITEs, over 200 GCE students celebrated Earth Day in Ashgabat, Balkanabat, Dashoguz, Mary and Turkmenabat with Earth Day activities aimed to protect our planet.

Introducing Earth Day to young people and community members, GCE students and MITEs organized a series of clean-ups all over Turkmenistan. More than 800 young people cleaned regions parks, natural resorts, streets, and school yards. In Ashgabat over 70 students gathered to clean-up the local zoo. In Turkmenabat, Tech Age Girls, Peace Corps Volunteers, and over 50 school students cleaned up a local beach on the bank of

the Amudarya river. Teenagers from Mary gathered to clean-up the territory of the Mary Central Park and in Balkanabat 20 young girls organized to clean-up the Balkanabat city park. In Dashoguz 20 school students gathered to clean-up the territory of the local kindergarten.

More than 30 students and teachers participated in a GCE live online discussion called *Give Thanks to Earth*. To prepare for the forum, participants conducted Web-based research on environmental issues and conservation. Ramis Alikperov, a student from Ashgabat shared Internet links of useful websites, including *Ecological Issues* (<http://www.outdoornatureclub.org/econews.html>) and



Ashgabat Zoo Park Clean-up

Ecological Wave

(www.baikalwave.eu.org/Ecodates/ecodates_e_earthday.htm). Students shared their opinions, knowledge, and observations and advocated for environmental conservation. They also offered solutions to existing problems. Karina Ismailova, a student from Dashoguz, shared her approach to environmental stewardship, “My classmates and I cleaned the school yard, planted 25 pine and fruit trees and water them every Saturday. I want our school to be clean and beautiful.”

Students agreed that Earth Day is an important holiday and posted 47 stories on the forum about environmental issues, many



of which were illustrated with collages. Natalia Amirova, TAG semifinalist from Dashoguz commented, “But it is impossible to thank Earth only once a year and everybody has to remember and care Earth everyday.”

